

MASSACHUSETTS AVENUE
Washington
District of Columbia

HABS NO. DC-703

HABS
DC
WASH,
619-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
P.O. Box 37127
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

MASSACHUSETTS AVENUE

HABS No. DC-703

HABS
DC
WASH
619-

Location: Within the section of the city laid out in the eighteenth century, this avenue spans from the juncture of Florida Avenue and 22nd Street near Rock Creek across the width of the city to the Anacostia River. From its northwest end it continues in a straight line southeast about twenty-two blocks to First Street, NW, where its angle increases slightly. From there it continues about sixteen blocks straight to its terminus at 19th and D streets, SE. In the nineteenth century, the avenue was extended northwest beyond the historic city boundary.

Owner/Manager: The right-of-way spanning from building line to building line is the property of the U.S. government; the paved roadways and sidewalks and the planted spaces between are under the jurisdiction of the District of Columbia Department of Public Works. The large circular and square parks as most of the smaller reservations along the avenue are maintained by the National Park Service (NPS). Medians and several other small reservations are managed by the District of Columbia.

Present Use: Major thoroughfare.

Significance: The path of Massachusetts Avenue was largely determined by L'Enfant's plan with modifications made by Andrew Ellicott. One of the longest avenues in the city, it far surpasses the rest in the number of federally owned reservations along it--more than forty. It also passes through numerous historic districts. From Florida Avenue to 17th Street, NW, it traverses the Dupont Circle Historic District; Scott Circle is within the 16th Street Historic District; Mount Vernon Square is an historic site; east of the Capitol, it traverses the Capitol Hill Historic District.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of plan: 1791, L'Enfant Plan; 1792, Ellicott Plan.

2. Alterations and additions:

1872: Paved with stone from Florida Avenue to the north side of Dupont Circle, paved with concrete from Dupont Circle to 14th Street, and paved with wood from 14th Street to New Jersey Avenue

1886: Beyond the historic city, the roadway was extended from Florida Avenue (Boundary Street) to Wisconsin Avenue, NW.

1903: Reservation Nos. 79, 80, and 81 transferred for the construction of Union Station Plaza.

1910: Massachusetts Avenue extended from Wisconsin Avenue to the District line.

1939: Tunnel constructed to carry Massachusetts Avenue traffic under Thomas Circle at 14th Street.

- 1941-42: Sixteenth Street tunneled under Scott Circle.
- 1951: Connecticut Avenue tunnelled under Dupont Circle.
- 1970s: The center leg of the Inner Loop Freeway constructed beneath the avenue between Second and Third streets.

B. Historical Context:

Within the historic city, Massachusetts Avenue rivals Pennsylvania Avenue in length, running roughly parallel to it to the north. In addition to passing through the greatest number of shaded and numbered reservations on L'Enfant's plan, on both plans, it also contains the greatest number of intersections--ten of them with other diagonal avenues.

On L'Enfant's plan, this avenue is the longest. Parallel to Pennsylvania Avenue, it runs from the northwest boundary of the city at an easterly turn in Rock Creek southeast to the Anacostia River. Three blocks south of the creek, it intersects with three other avenues and several streets at a large amorphous intersection that would later become Dupont Circle (See HABS No. DC-669). Continuing south it intersects with today's 16th Street and Rhode Island Avenue at a juncture now known as Scott Circle (See HABS No. DC-684). Two blocks south, is the intersection with Vermont Avenue. The open space at the intersection, (later named Thomas Circle, see HABS No. DC-687) shaded yellow and labeled "No. 9," is one of four intersections so designated on the avenue. L'Enfant explained the meaning of these distinctions in his references:

The Squares colored yellow, being fifteen in number, are proposed to be divided among the several States in the Union, for each of them to improve, or subscribe a sum additional to the value of the land for that purpose, and the improvements around the squares to be completed in a limited time.

The center of each Square will admit of Statues, Columns, Obelisks, or any other ornaments, such as the different States may choose to erect; to perpetuate not only the memory of such individuals whose Counsels or military achievements were conspicuous in giving liberty and independence to this Country; but also those whose usefulness hath rendered them worthy of general imitation: to invite Youth of succeeding generations to tread in the paths of those Sages or heroes whom their Country has thought proper to celebrate.

The situation of these Squares is such that they are the most advantageously and reciprocally seen from each other, and as equally distributed over the whole City district, and connected by spacious Avenues round the grand Federal Improvements, and as contiguous to them, and at the same time as equally distant from each other, as circumstances would admit. The settlements round those squares must soon become connected.¹

Four blocks east of Vermont Avenue, the intersection with New York

¹ Legend on L'Enfant's plan.

Avenue forms a large square two blocks wide between Seventh and Ninth streets (See Mount Vernon Square, HABS No. DC-682). Shaded and labeled "No. 2," it spans the Eighth Street "corridor," a major axis bisecting the Mall and including several reservations, a cascade, and a column.

The intersection of New Jersey Avenue four blocks to the east is also shaded and labeled "No. 12." One block south of this intersection, the avenue crosses into the northeast quadrant of the city at North Capitol Street; a block east of North Capitol Street it intersects Delaware Avenue at a large open square. This square is also the origin of the "New Road to Bladensburg," which extends northeast from its corner to the city limits. At this point the avenue turns slightly south, continuing along this new angle to the Anacostia River. Its intersection with today's Maryland Avenue is shaded yellow and labeled "No. 5", (See Stanton Square, HABS No. DC-686), and the intersection with East Capitol Street is indicated with an "E" designating it as the site of "in itinerary column from which all distances in the continent are to be measured" (See Lincoln Park, HABS No. DC-677). The avenue continues from this square through the southeast quadrant with no interruptions before reaching a large open space intended for a hospital near the banks of the Anacostia River.

Among Ellicott's variations to the plan for the avenue in the northwest quadrant was the redefinition of the amorphous intersections at New Hampshire, Vermont, and New Jersey avenues as circles. In the northeast quadrant, where L'Enfant's avenue bends south at the intersection with Delaware Avenue, Ellicott's avenue continues on the same angle to the city limits. Also at this intersection, the avenue connecting to the "New Road to Bladensburg" has been omitted, making the intersection itself much smaller. In the southeast quadrant, Ellicott extended South Carolina Avenue so that it terminates at the avenue two blocks south of Lincoln Square. Because Ellicott straightened Massachusetts Avenue, it terminates farther north on the Anacostia River than L'Enfant intended at an open space including a large building with detailed landscaping.

The route for Massachusetts Avenue traversed the property of at least eight of the original landholders who turned over portions of their land at no charge for the creation of streets and avenues. It also crossed over at least two creeks; the Slash Run near its intersection with 16th Street and Goose Creek at its intersection with North Capitol Street.² Massachusetts Avenue ran parallel to Pennsylvania Avenue about seven blocks north, and since the city's early development focused on the latter avenue, the former roughly marked the northern limits of the city until after the mid 1800s. For instance, in the "act to Prevent Swine from Going at Large" passed by the city council in 1809, the restrictions of the law applied to "any part of this city south of Massachusetts Avenue."³

Much of the avenue was still relatively undeveloped when the Civil War broke out, as revealed in a map compiled in 1857-61. In the southeast quadrant a few structures faced onto the square at the intersection of Maryland Avenue. In the northwest quadrant, buildings lined the blocks between North Capitol Street and Vermont Avenue, but there was very little development north of that point, and much of the avenue appears to be uncleared.

The area of densest population before the war centered around the

² McNeil, 42-43.

³ Federal Writer's Project, 676.

intersection of New York and Massachusetts avenues in a neighborhood referred to as the Northern Liberties. A market known by the same name served the community from the east side of the open space, which would later become Mount Vernon Square.⁴

Following the Civil War, however, development rapidly spread northwest along the avenue. In 1868 Brig Gen. Nathaniel Michler, Army Corps of Engineers officer in charge of the Office of Public Buildings and Grounds (OPB&G), recognized its potential:

Massachusetts Avenue should be made one of the most magnificent ones in the metropolis. It extends from Boundary Street, near the paper mill bridge across Rock Creek, to the public grounds occupied by the government powder magazines, on the banks of the Eastern Branch, and is very nearly parallel to the main thoroughfare, Pennsylvania Avenue. Some very little work was executed towards opening it, at several places, to the travelling public. For many years it had remained closed; houses, gardens, brick kilns, and other obstructions preventing it from being used. It is one of the most direct lines of communication between a large section of the city of Washington and a great portion of Georgetown.⁵

Three years later, Congress granted home rule to the District of Columbia by granting it the status of a territory. Although this territorial government lasted only three years, its Board of Public Works, under the leadership of Alexander "Boss" Shepherd, graded and paved miles of streets, installed gas and sewer lines, and planted thousands of trees throughout the city. The board focused particularly upon improving Massachusetts Avenue in the northwest quadrant.

A map published by the board in 1872 suggests that Massachusetts Avenue had been, or was in the process of being, paved with stone from Boundary Street (Florida Avenue) to Dupont Circle (then called Pacific Circle), with concrete around the circle and south to Thomas Circle; and with wood from Thomas Circle to New Jersey Avenue. Because Washington's streets and avenues were unusually wide, the "parking system" developed in 1870 called for the local government to improve roadbeds wide enough for vehicular traffic. The roads were to be flanked with sodded strips with street trees and sidewalks. Local citizens were not only allowed, but encouraged, to treat the federal property remaining between the sidewalk and their property line as their own front yard. It was hoped that by assigning this property to residents, it would be improved at no cost to the government.

As the streets were paved, the many circles, squares, and triangles at the intersections that fell neither within the roadway nor anyone's front yard became more apparent. Because they were technically the property of the federal government, the Army Corps of Engineers, in charge of the OPB&G, was charged with their improvement. By June 1872, several such spaces on Massachusetts Avenue were identified and had been somewhat improved. Dupont Circle was graded and surrounded by "a poor wooden fence" although it had no paths or plantings; Thomas Circle was enclosed with an iron fence and was in the process of

⁴ Boschke map.

⁵ Annual Report . . ., 1868, 13.

being landscaped with walks, plantings, and a fountain; and Lincoln and Mount Vernon Squares and Reservation Nos. 68 and 69 were surrounded by picket fences.⁶ By 1876, Army Corps Engineer Orville E. Babcock reported that he had overseen complete improvement of Dupont and Scott Circles, Mount Vernon and Lincoln squares as well as five triangular reservations on Massachusetts Avenue.

Not all of the development during this time met public approval and allegations of scandal led to a congressional investigation in 1872, and finally the demise of the territorial government in 1874. Shepherd was accused of slating improvements in areas where he and his cronies owned property. Speculators, predicting development trends, were able to purchase property cheaply, then sell it at great profit after the infrastructural improvements were made to the surrounding streets and parks. To encourage the sale of the subdivided lots, the amenities of these areas were often exaggerated, as in this article that appeared in the Washington Chronicle in 1874:

Any person who will take the map will see that the grand central avenue of the city for residences and ornamentation was meant to be Massachusetts and not Pennsylvania avenue . . . not less than thirteen circles, squares, and intersections are strewn along Massachusetts Avenue and it is crossed at such angles as to afford the longest and most magnificent prospects by every great avenue in the city, except two, Pennsylvania and Virginia, which run parallel to it on the south . . . The market sheds were demolished, which stood on the most central spot in Washington, and in place of those shambles the magnificent New York Avenue is opened across the new and beautiful Mount Vernon Square, placing in the perspective to the south the new State Department, President's House, and Treasury, magnificently massed together affording to the north the splendid prospects of grove and hillock around Brentwood.⁷

Removal of the market sheds mentioned above was one of the most controversial actions undertaken by the Board of Public Works. Known as the Northern Liberties Market, it was built in the 1840s and grew to serve the expanding population in the area. As more elegant homes were built in the neighborhood, it came to be seen as an eyesore and a health hazard, and residents petitioned to have it removed and replaced with a park. In spite of resistance from stall keepers, Shepherd sent crews in to destroy the market in 1872. The demolition, which resulted in two deaths, created widespread friction for the board. Shepherd was accused of destroying the market for personal gain, since he had financial interests in a competing market.

Despite Shepherd's political problems, his infrastructural improvements promoted growth along Massachusetts Avenue. As planned, lots facing onto the newly improved parks became prime real estate and elegant homes were built around Thomas, Scott, and Dupont circles. Fashionable homes were also built along Massachusetts Avenue, connecting these pods of socialites that included industrial magnates, ambassadors, politicians, and military officers. The paving and improvement of the Dupont Circle area was simultaneous with the purchase of

⁶ Annual Report . . ., 1872.

⁷ Colyer, 113.

much of the land around the circle by Senator William Morris Stewart and others who had made millions in the California Gold Rush. Scott Circle, ornamented with an equestrian statue of Gen. Winfield Scott also became the site of great mansions in the 1880s. As a result of the board's extensive tree-planting program, Massachusetts Avenue became known for its magnificent double row of linden trees running its entire length from the boundary at Rock Creek to Lincoln Park.

After the government reverted to a board of federally appointed commissioners, the territorial government left as its legacy a thriving avenue in the northwest quadrant. East of Mount Vernon Square, the avenue was less developed. For example, in 1881 the 50' wide roadway was paved with asphalt between Boundary and Seventh streets, wood from Seventh Street to New Jersey Avenue, and with gravel from New Jersey Avenue southeast to Lincoln Square; it was unimproved from Lincoln Square to the almshouse and powder magazine in the large federal reservation at its southeast terminus. The homes that were eventually built east of this point were more modest, and likewise, instead of featuring elaborate plantings and statuary, the reservations at this end were more simply embellished with post-and-rail fences; others remained unimproved. The most developed area in the northeast quadrant was around Stanton Square between Fourth and Sixth streets, NE. The square had been improved in 1879 and featured a central equestrian statue. The same year, an elementary school had been built on its south side for the growing population of children who lived in the middle- and upper-class homes clustered around the square and the surrounding streets. The avenue remained unpaved from Lincoln Park to the Anacostia River until after the turn of the century, despite the fact that Lincoln Park, between Eleventh and 13th streets, had been improved as early as 1876, and the large federal property at its east end had been used since the mid nineteenth century as a hospital and jail.

The eastern end of Massachusetts Avenue developed slowly, and after its initial improvement remained relatively unchanged, in contrast to the northwest section, which evolved rapidly. After a bridge was built in 1901 along the line of the avenue over the Rock Creek in 1901, the population began spreading northwest up the avenue beyond the city's original boundaries. Some of the largest and most opulent homes were erected along this stretch northwest of Thomas Circle and beyond Florida Avenue. By the early twentieth century, a number of these elegant Victorian dwellings had been replaced by Neoclassical ones and as the century progressed, many were converted from private residences into embassies, clubs, and private organizations.

Great changes also took place in the first decade of the twentieth century farther south on the avenue near the Capitol, after the intersection at Delaware Avenue was chosen as the site for a large railroad station in 1902. The Senate Park Commission, appointed to study the city's park system, focused especially upon removing a railroad station constructed on the Mall during the Shepherd years. The Massachusetts Avenue site was a practical choice since this area had been slow to develop due to the deep Goose Creek ravine, as well as the noisy and dirty railroad tracks that had passed through the vicinity since the 1860s. Daniel Burnham's monumental Union Station which was completed in 1908, succeeded in consolidating all of the city's tracks in one location, and its huge hulk shielded them from the Capitol only three blocks to the southwest. The station also promoted more development on the avenue in its vicinity, such as the U. S. Post Office which was built to the west around the same time. The station was situated to enhance L'Enfant's vision for the city. An additional avenue radiating from the station to the Mall was added to the city plan. Named Louisiana Avenue, this

completed the wagon-wheel effect created by Massachusetts and Delaware avenues and First Street that all radiate out from the station. A large, semicircular plaza in front of the station was added to the number of reservations in the city and was embellished with a statue honoring Christopher Columbus in 1912. This large park in front of the station became a ceremonial space for the city and afforded vistas of the Capitol and the Mall.

With the increasing growth of the northwest quadrant and the advent of the automobile in the 1920-30s, Massachusetts Avenue became a major commuter artery to the northwest. Following the recommendations of the McMillan Commission, circular and triangular parks were set aside along the new segment of the avenue that stretched north to the Maryland border and were embellished with statues and plantings. Meanwhile, the circles and squares at the avenue's inner city intersections impeded automobile traffic flow. In the second decade of the century, traffic islands were created at the larger intersections to help direct motorists, but by the 1930s each of the parks interrupting the flow of traffic became scenes of major rush-hour bottlenecks. In the 1930-40s underpasses were installed beneath Thomas, Scott, and Dupont circles. The increasing traffic around these nodes, stripped the parks of their quiet residential character, and within the decades of the 1940s, 50s, and 60s, a number of the homes facing onto these circles were demolished and replaced with high-rise office buildings, hotels, and apartments. Fortunately, many remain, however, and are maintained by the private organizations that use them for offices. Because so many are now occupied by embassies, the segment of the avenue west of Dupont Circle has come to be called Embassy Row.

Meanwhile, the area between Mount Vernon Square and Union Station stagnated after the Depression, as many of the structures along this stretch became run down or dilapidated. A guidebook published in 1936 described this area: "Beyond Second Street to Seventh, Massachusetts Avenue is bordered by rows of old, small, shabby buildings, now chiefly occupied by Negroes."⁸

The most recent change to Massachusetts avenue affected this same area. In the 1970s an inner beltway was proposed to further alleviate the District's growing traffic congestion. While most of the freeway plans were aborted after residents opposed the destruction of their neighborhoods, the center leg of the freeway running between Second and Third streets from the Capitol to New York Avenue was completed, probably because the neighborhoods it disrupted were considered blighted areas occupied by poor blacks. Although the freeway does not interrupt the flow of Massachusetts Avenue, which bridges over it, this multi-lane high-speed artery with its on- and off-ramps has fragmented the area. A park was added north of the avenue in the air space over the freeway, but since the area is still relatively derelict, it is poorly maintained.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. Overall dimensions:

1. Width: The right-of-way is 160' wide from building line to building line.
2. Length within city limits: Although the avenue extends far beyond the

⁸ Federal Writer's Project, 680-81.

original boundaries, within the historic city, it is approximately 4.4 miles long.

B. Elements within the right-of-way:

1. Roadway: The avenue supports two lanes of traffic each way almost its entire length. The following medians have been installed on Capitol Hill to further direct traffic on this busy thoroughfare.
 - a. North of the avenue, south of Constitution Avenue, west of Fourth Street, NE. This brick triangular traffic divider lies to the west of Reservation No. 85 and was transferred to the District of Columbia December 14, 1972.
 - b. Between 14th and 15th streets, SE. This long brick median with handicapped curb cut and traffic signals at each end runs parallel to the north side of Reservation No. 89A. It was transferred to the District of Columbia December 13, 1972.
 - c. Between 14th and 15th streets, SE. This long brick median with handicapped curb cut and traffic signals at each end runs parallel to the median described above.
 - d. Reservation No. 703: Between 14th and 15th streets, SE. This long brick median runs parallel to the northeast side of Reservation No. 90, and was transferred to the District of Columbia December 14, 1972.
 - e. Reservation No. 704: Between 14th and 15th streets, SE. This a concrete median that was transferred to the District of Columbia December 14, 1972.
2. Sidewalks and street trees: East of Union Station and West of Dupont Circle, the avenue remains largely residential. In these areas, brick or concrete sidewalks flank the roadway with lindens and oaks planted in cutouts near the curb. Between Union Station and Dupont Circle, where the avenue is more commercial and built up with larger structures, the sidewalks continue, but the trees are less consistent. These strips also support traffic signs, parking meters, and lighting. Most of the avenue is illuminated by highway lamps, but Washington Globe standards illuminate the avenue between North Capitol Street and Stanton Park.
3. Major reservations:
 - a. At its intersection with New Hampshire and Connecticut avenues, Massachusetts Avenue traffic is channeled through the center, through-traffic lane at Dupont Circle (See HABS No. DC-669).
 - b. At its intersection with Rhode Island Avenue and 16th Street, Massachusetts Avenue traffic merges in a counter-clockwise direction around the Scott Circle (See HABS No. DC-684).

- c. At the intersection of 14th and M streets and Vermont Avenue, Massachusetts Avenue traffic travels under Thomas Circle (See HABS No. DC-687).
 - d. Between Ninth and Seventh streets, NW, Massachusetts Avenue traffic is interrupted at Mount Vernon Square (See HABS No. DC-682). Since the roadway on the north and east sides of the square are one-way east and south, respectively, westbound traffic on Massachusetts Avenue must detour north on Sixth Street before the square and continue west on L Street, rejoining Massachusetts Avenue at Twelfth Street, NW, near Reservation Nos. 68 and 69.
 - e. Between North Capitol and First streets, NE, Massachusetts Avenue traffic is diverted in a semicircle around Union Plaza at Union Station (See HABS No. DC-694).
 - f. Between Fourth and Sixth streets, NE, Massachusetts Avenue traffic is diverted counter-clockwise around Stanton Park (See HABS No. DC-686).
 - g. Between Eleventh and 13th street, NE and SE, Massachusetts Avenue traffic is diverted counter-clockwise around Lincoln Park (See HABS No. DC-677).
4. Smaller reservations: Most of the smaller reservations along Massachusetts Avenue remain intact since their enumeration in 1894. Those that have been severely altered or destroyed are described by their original locations. Unless otherwise indicated, they are managed and maintained by the National Park Service. Current descriptions are from a survey undertaken in summer 1990.
- a. Reservation No. 57: South of the avenue, east of 22nd Street, north of Q Street, NW. This freestanding triangular reservation was first improved around 1887. Today it features a brick-paved semicircle with three rounded concrete-base wood-slat backless benches around its perimeter facing Massachusetts Avenue. A hedge of holly encircles the rear of the paved area and various ornamental trees are planted asymmetrically to its east and west. A granite "OPB&G" marker remains in the southeast corner; the northwest corner is paved in brick. A plaque on the easternmost bench indicates that the plant material in the park was donated by the Trowel Club of the Garden Clubs of America, April 21, 1966.
 - b. Reservation No. 58: North of the avenue, west of 21st Street, south of Q Street, NW. This large freestanding triangular reservation was first improved in 1886 with a cast-iron post-and-chain fence, trees and shrubs, and a large "Warwick" iron vase in the center. It is now delineated from concrete perimeter walks by quarter-round concrete coping. Two tall, mature trees shade most of the park and an ornamental weeping tree occupies the center of the park.

- c. Reservation No. 59: South of the avenue, east of 20th Street, north of P Street, NW. This freestanding quadrilateral reservation just west of Dupont Circle was officially identified in 1872 and was first improved in 1883 with a cast-iron post-and-chain fence, flag pavement, and a central ornamental fountain. In 1904 a watchman's lodge was moved here from the Smithsonian Grounds to shelter the guard who protected and maintained the circle and nearby reservations. Today the parklet serves a variety of functions and is basically landscaped in three panels running north to south. The westernmost panel is divided into three parts by two concrete paths running east to west. The southernmost part of the panel has a bus shelter and concrete-base wood-slat bench. Between the two paths is a brick building with restrooms which replaced the older lodge in 1930. The area north of the paths is sodded. The center panel of the park features scattered ornamental trees and shrubs, a public telephone, and a small concrete platform built for an unknown function. The panel facing the circle contains the underground trolley station entry consisting of concrete steps with metal railings leading east under the circle. The top of the entryway is embellished by Washington Globe lamp standards. Shrubs are massed around this entryway.
- d. Reservation No. 61: North of the avenue, east of Dupont Circle, south of P Street, NW. This quadrilateral reservation abuts the property of a large building and also features an entryway for the historic streetcar system. Although identified as federal property in 1887, it was tended by the adjacent landowner in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. An entrance to the underground trolley station was built in this reservation and used throughout the 1940s and 50s and remains, dormant, in the park today. The reservation was officially transferred to the District of Columbia April 26, 1951 when the underpass was installed. Today, the entire reservation is filled with overgrown shrub massing and features one large shade tree and concrete coping. A concrete path runs along the east side.
- e. Reservation Nos. 62, 62A, 62B 63, 64A, and 64B are included in the Scott Circle Report (See HABS No. DC-684).
- f. Reservation No. 65: South of the avenue, west of 14th Street, north of M Street, NW (1,408.50 square feet). This semicircular reservation abuts City Square No. 213 which features a privately owned, landscaped park. The segment of this large open space that is managed by NPS is entirely planted with evergreen shrub massing and is delineated from the private park by flat concrete coping. Historically, this reservation was the subject of a land-rights controversy in the 1880s when the owner of the abutting property in City Square No. 213 built an addition to her house that infringed upon the park. The park was greatly eroded in 1939 by the construction of the Thomas Circle underpass.

- g. Reservation No. 65A: North of the avenue, between 14th and 15th streets, NW (2,231 square feet). An 8,450 square-foot-strip of land originally known as Highland Terrace, was added to the list of reservations in 1903. Connected to City Square No. 212, the reservation separated the elevated roadway in front of a row of houses from the main roadway of Massachusetts Avenue. It was planted with low shrubs and featured two sets of stairs leading down to the level of the sidewalk along Massachusetts Avenue. It was pared down by the 1939 construction of an underpass at Thomas Circle. A badly deteriorated post-and-pipe fence erected in 1913 still separates the park from what is now a parking lot in City Square No. 212. Featuring a steep incline, a random-course stone wall runs the length of Massachusetts Avenue. Two concrete stairways lead from the street level to the elevated roadway. A single Washington Globe lamp standard remains on the north side of the reservation. The untended strip is planted with overgrown trees and shrubs. It was transferred to the District of Columbia December 14, 1972.
- h. Reservation No. 67: North of the avenue, east of Thomas Circle, south of M Street, NW (1,774.86 square feet). This reservation abutting City Square No. 246 was triangular until a roadway sliced through it, paring off the tip, which is now a concrete traffic island. Like its counterpart on the other side of the circle, this park abuts a privately owned and landscaped park. The segment managed by NPS is entirely planted with evergreen shrub massing. The park is surrounded by concrete coping and perimeter sidewalks.
- i. Reservation Nos. 68 and 69 are described in the Gompers Park Report (HABS No. DC-675).
- j. Reservation No. 70: South of the avenue, west of Ninth Street, north of K Street, NW. This sodded trapezoid abuts City Square No. 371, the site of Mount Vernon Place Methodist Episcopal Church. It was first improved in the 1880s with iron railings and flowering shrubs. Across from Mount Vernon Square, it is now surrounded by concrete perimeter walks and has an interior asphalt path on the west side. Within its quarter-round-coping borders is one shade tree and a formal evergreen hedge planted inside an iron urn-finial fence probably installed in the 1930s.
- k. Reservation No. 71: North of the avenue, east of Seventh Street, south of K Street, NW. Abutting the property of the American Security Bank in City Square No. 452, this sodded trapezoid featuring two young trees is delineated from the concrete perimeter sidewalk by new quarter-round coping. It was first improved around 1880 with a post-and-chain fence, dwarf trees and shrubs, gas lamps, and a flagstone pavement.
- l. Reservation No. 72: South of the avenue, between Fifth and Sixth streets, north of I Street, NW. Officially identified in 1872, this

large trapezoid was first improved between 1871-76 with a light wrought-iron railing, ornamental trees, and flowerbeds. Today it is sodded and delineated from the concrete perimeter walk by quarter-round coping. Asphalt interior paths and iron urn-finial fences run parallel to H and Sixth streets. Thirteen metal-support wood-slat benches and four tulip-type trash cans line the paths. The park also features several shade trees.

- m. Reservation No. 73: South of the avenue, east of Fifth Street, north of I Street, NW. Officially identified in 1887, this reservation was first improved in 1902 and surrounded with concrete coping in 1906. Now a brick-paved triangle, it has one opening on the north side where a tree is planted.
- n. Reservation No. 74: North of the avenue, west of Fifth Street, south of I Street, NW. Officially identified in 1884, this reservation was improved by 1887 with a post-and-chain fence, gravel walks, and low trees and shrubs. Nine metal-frame wood-slat benches now face into this sodded triangular park along asphalt paths that are articulated by iron retaining strips running parallel to Fifth and I streets. Three shade trees stand in the large sodded area and a tree grate shows where another, now gone, was planted between two of the benches.
- o. Reservation No. 75: South of the avenue, east of Fourth Street, north of H Street, NW. This reservation was enclosed with a post-and-pipe rail fence by 1884 and was graded and planted by 1887. On April 25, 1967, it was transferred to the District of Columbia (Land Transfer Order No. 563). It is now indistinguishable as a reservation and is entirely paved.
- p. Reservation No. 76: North of the avenue, west of Third Street, south of H Street, NW. This reservation was enclosed with a post-and-pipe rail fence by 1884 and was graded and planted by 1887. On April 25, 1967, it was transferred to the District of Columbia (Land Transfer Order No. 563). It is now indistinguishable as a reservation and is entirely paved.
- q. Reservation No. 77: Circle at the intersection of the avenue with New Jersey Avenue, First, and G streets, NW. This circle was first improved in 1884, and by 1894 it was enclosed with a post-and-chain fence. On October 5, 1908, it was transferred to the District of Columbia for a roadway. The reservation was dismantled and paved over as part of the roadway.
- r. Reservation No. 77A: North of the avenue, east of New Jersey Avenue, NW. This amorphous park was created when Reservation No. 77 was transferred from the reservation system in 1908. It is divided into two parts by an access road between Massachusetts Avenue and G Street. Both sections are sodded and planted with shrubs.

- s. Reservation No. 77B: South of the avenue, east of New Jersey Avenue, north of G Street, NW. This triangular reservation was created when Reservation No. 77 was transferred from the reservation system in 1908. It is sodded and surrounded by concrete coping and concrete perimeter sidewalks with sodded and planted parking strips. A single tree grows in the center.
- t. Reservation No. 78: South of the avenue, west of North Capitol Street, north of F Street, NW. This reservation was first improved in 1902 and featured a post-and-chain fence. Now the sodded triangle is delineated from concrete perimeter walks by quarter-round coping. It abuts a former Neo-classical-style bank and features a flagpole in its center.
- u. Reservation No. 79: North of the avenue at the northwest edge of the Union Station semicircular plaza. A small triangle holding a traffic light, paved with Belgian blocks, is all that remains of this reservation that was transferred to the District of Columbia February 12, 1901.
- v. Reservation No. 80: South of the avenue, west of First Street, north of E Street, NE. This triangle was improved in part by 1884. It was transferred from the park system for Union Station in 1901.
- w. Reservation No. 81: North of the avenue at the southeast edge of Union Station plaza. This triangle featured a post-and-chain fence in 1902, a year after it was transferred to the District of Columbia for Union Station construction. In its place there is now a small paved triangle with a traffic signal.
- x. Reservation No. 82: South of the avenue, east of Second Street, north of D Street, NE. This sodded triangle is surrounded by concrete perimeter sidewalks and quarter-round coping, and features four shade trees. Asphalt paths run parallel to Second and D streets, and along them are three tulip-type trash receptacles and seven metal-frame, wood-slat benches facing the streets.
- y. Reservation No. 83: North of the avenue, east of Third Street, south of D Street, NE. Officially identified in 1884, this reservation was first improved with a post-and-chain fence in 1901. The triangle is now bordered by a sidewalk that is brick along D Street and concrete elsewhere. It also features a brick interior path and a concrete path on the east side. A large shrub fills the acute angle. Two benches face Massachusetts Avenue. A wood rail fence was erected by the owner of the abutting liquor store to prevent vehicles from backing into the landscaped park.
- z. Reservation No. 84: South of the avenue, north of Constitution Avenue at Seventh Street, NE (9,661 square feet). This sodded quadrilateral reservation abuts City Square No. 866. It was first

improved in 1884 when it was enclosed with a post-and-chain fence. By 1894 it featured a central flower bed. Jurisdiction of this reservation was transferred to the District of Columbia on December 14, 1972. It is now surrounded by concrete coping, brick and concrete perimeter walks, and sodded parking strips with trees. The park features several symmetrically placed shade trees and has two converging semicircular pathways. Two metal-frame, wood-slat benches face onto the path.

- aa. Reservation No. 85: North of the avenue, east of Ninth Street, south of Constitution Avenue, NE. This symmetrically landscaped quadrilateral features semicircular brick terraces on the north and south sides. Three steps lead from these sidewalk-level terraces to an elevated central terrace with a circular stone fountain in its center. The landscaped areas within the trapezoid, planted with shrubs and shade trees, are also elevated and are surrounded by a brick retaining wall. The three paved areas feature large, round, concrete planters. These planters are empty, and the fountain does not work. Jurisdiction of this reservation was transferred to the District of Columbia on December 14, 1972.
- bb. Reservation No. 86: South of the avenue, west of Ninth Street, north of A Street, NE. Officially identified in 1884, this reservation was improved with a post-and-chain fence by 1894. The sodded trapezoid is now set off from the concrete perimeter sidewalks by quarter-round coping, is planted with four shade trees, and features an undulating concrete path along its west side. It also contains four pet-control signs. Jurisdiction of this reservation was transferred to the District of Columbia on December 14, 1972.
- cc. Reservation No. 87: South of the avenue, east of Ninth Street, north of A Street, NE. This reservation was not officially identified until 1894 when it was graded and sodded. Today the sodded triangle with a central ornamental tree is set off from the perimeter herring-bone-brick walk by a cast-iron post-and-chain fence with OPB&G finials. Its most acute angle is marked with an inscribed OPB&G stone marker. Jurisdiction of this reservation was transferred to the District of Columbia on December 14, 1972.
- dd. Reservation No. 88: North of the avenue, south of A Street, SE. Officially identified in 1884, this reservation was probably not improved until after the turn of the century. This elaborately landscaped triangle is mounded up from the street level. The sodded and landscaped areas are delineated from the concrete perimeter sidewalk by quarter-round coping, and two runs of wood, railroad-tie steps lead from the perimeter sidewalks on both A Street and Massachusetts Avenue to the elevated park. Each of these flights is flanked by wood, railroad-tie wingwalls, and various evergreen shrubs. The two westernmost flights are connected by a brick interior path spanning the park. A bench faces east onto the

path. The side of the park along Massachusetts Avenue features a garden terraced with wood railroad ties and planted with bushes and flowers. Several ornamental and shade trees are planted throughout the park. Jurisdiction of this reservation was transferred to the District of Columbia on December 14, 1972.

- ee. Reservation No. 89: South of the avenue, west of 14th Street, north of Independence Avenue, SE. This sodded trapezoid is planted with low shrubs along the west side, and is delineated from the concrete perimeter sidewalks by quarter-round coping. A rectangular flowerbed covers the southwest corner. Jurisdiction of this reservation was transferred to the District of Columbia on December 14, 1972.
- ff. Reservation No. 89A: South of the avenue, east of 14th Street, north of Independence Avenue, SE. This sodded triangle is surrounded by concrete. Jurisdiction of this reservation was transferred to the District of Columbia on December 14, 1972.
- gg. Reservation No. 90: South of the avenue, west of 15th Street, north of South Carolina Avenue, SE. This sodded boomerang-shaped reservation is bordered by a perimeter sidewalk along Massachusetts Avenue and features two ornamental trees. An interior concrete path spans from the Massachusetts Avenue side to North Carolina Avenue. Jurisdiction of this reservation was transferred to the District of Columbia on December 14, 1972.
- hh. Reservation No. 91: North of the avenue, west of 15th Street, south of Independence Avenue, SE. This triangular reservation has been divided into two triangular units by an extension of North Carolina Avenue. Both sections are sodded and have concrete perimeter sidewalks, the east section being outlined with quarter-round coping. The west section has a bench consisting of a metal frame with a plank seat and back facing onto Massachusetts Avenue. An interior asphalt path parallels the perimeter sidewalk along 15th Street in the east section. Both sections are planted with several ornamental trees, and the east part features a deciduous hedge between the asphalt path and the parallel sidewalk. Jurisdiction of this reservation was transferred to the District of Columbia December 14, 1972.
- ii. Reservation No. 92: South of the avenue, east of 17th Street, north of C Street, SE. Although this reservation was officially identified in 1872, it was not improved until after the turn of the century. The sodded triangle is now delineated from the concrete perimeter sidewalks by quarter-round coping and features a small ornamental tree near its most acute angle. Jurisdiction of this reservation was transferred to the District of Columbia December 14, 1972.
- jj. Reservation No. 93: North of the avenue, east of 18th Street, south of C Street, SE. This sodded triangle is graded about 3' above the

street level and features a railroad-tie retaining wall. There is a shrub near the most acute angle and a hedge along the east side. The reservation affords a vista southeast along Massachusetts Avenue to Anacostia. Jurisdiction of this reservation was transferred to the District of Columbia December 14, 1972.

5. Buildings: The Carnegie Library at Mount Vernon Square was constructed within the original Massachusetts Avenue right-of-way.
 6. Front yards: In the residential sections east of Union Station and west of Dupont Circle, private property owners have landscaped wide front yards which are in many cases enclosed with fences or stone retaining walls. The segment between Union Station and Mount Vernon Square features a variety of new office buildings with well-kept grounds interspersed with untended vacant lots. Because many of the properties between Mount Vernon Square and Dupont Circle are so large, additional curb cuts and circular drives are carved out of the wide front yards. Several of the linden trees that once formed the double row down the avenue remain standing between the sidewalks and the property lines.
- C. Framing elements: The avenue is very clearly framed in the residential sections southeast of Union Station and northwest of Dupont Circle. The segment between Union Station and Mount Vernon Square includes large buildings that do not comply to the buildings lines, as well as numerous vacant lots. Between Mount Vernon Square and Scott Circle, the roadway is framed largely by tall office buildings, apartments, and embassies.
- D. Vistas:
1. Vista to Dupont Circle from the west.
 2. Reciprocal vistas between Dupont and Scott circles.
 3. Reciprocal vistas between Scott and Thomas circles.
 4. Reciprocal vistas between Thomas Circle and the Carnegie Library in Mount Vernon Square.
 5. Long vista from Union Station to Mount Vernon Square
 6. Reciprocal vistas between Union Plaza and Stanton Square.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Maps:

Army Corps of Engineers. "Map of the City of Washington showing the Public Reservations Under Control of the Office of Public Buildings and Grounds." 1884, 1887, and 1894.

Board of Commissioners. "City of Washington Statistical Map Showing the

Different Types of Street Trees." 1880.

Board of Public Works. "Exhibit Chart of Improved Streets and Avenues." 1872.

Boschke, A. "Topographical Map of the District of Columbia surveyed in the years '57, '58, and '59."

Ellicott, Andrew. "Plan of the City of Washington." 1792.

Hopkins, G. "Map of the District of Columbia from Official Records and Actual Surveys." 1887.

L'Enfant, Pierre Charles. "Plan of the City of Washington." 1791.

Toner, Joseph M. "Sketch of Washington in Embryo." 1874.

B. Early Views:

1911: Photograph of Massachusetts Avenue at Eleventh Street, NE, showing thirty-year-old American Linden trees (Solotaroff, 36).

1927-29: Photographs were taken of each reservations during a citywide survey (photographs of reservations under NPS jurisdiction are in the NPS Reservation Files; photographs of those transferred to the District of Columbia are in the HSW Reservations Collection).

C. Bibliography:

Annual Reports of the Office of Public Buildings and Grounds, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, 1867-1933.

Colyer, George Speer. "The L'Enfant Plan in Downtown Washington: Its History and Prospects for Survival." Masters Thesis, George Washington University, 1987.

Commission of Fine Arts. Massachusetts Avenue Architecture II. Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1975.

Federal Writers Project. Washington City and Capital. Works Progress Administration. Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1937.

Goode, James M. Capital Losses: A Cultural History of Washington's Destroyed Buildings. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1979.

Harrison, S. R. "Modern Street Intersection Design, Washington, D.C." Washington, D.C: American Road Builders' Association, Municipal Bulletin No. 131, 1948.

McNeil, Priscilla W. "Rock Creek Hundred: Land Conveyed for the Federal City." Washington History 3 (Spring/Summer 1991): 34-51.

Reservation Files. Office of Land Use. National Capital Region Headquarters.
National Park Service.

Reservations Collection. Historical Society of Washington.

Solotaroff, William. Shade Trees in Towns and Cities. New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1911.

Prepared by: Elizabeth Barthold
Project Historian
National Park Service
1993

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION:

The Plan of Washington, D.C., project was carried out from 1990-93 by the Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record (HABS/HAER) Division, Robert J. Kapsch, chief. The project sponsors were the Morris and Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation Inc. of Washington, D.C.; the Historic Preservation Division, District of Columbia Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs, which provided Historic Preservation Fund monies; the National Capital Region and its White House Liaison office, NPS; and the National Park Foundation Inc.

HABS historian Sara Amy Leach was the project leader and Elizabeth J. Barthold was project historian. Architectural delineators were: Robert Arzola, HABS; Julianne Jorgensen, University of Maryland; Robert Juskevich, Catholic University of America; Sandra M. E. Leiva, US/ICOMOS-Argentina; and Tomasz Zweich, US/ICOMOS-Poland, Board of Historical Gardens and Palace Conservation. Katherine Grandine served as a data collector. The photographs are by John McWilliams, Atlanta, except for the aerial views, which are by Jack E. Boucher, HABS, courtesy of the U.S. Park Police - Aviation Division.